

H.B. 6355: Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) Modernization

Good afternoon. My name is Jennifer Lawlor. I am a lifelong CT resident, a part of the Everytown for Gun Safety Fellow program and the mother of a murdered child. I am testifying today in favor of the Extreme Risk Protection Order Modernization bill as I believe its update will save many lives.

On December 8, 2018 my 25 year old daughter Emily Todd was shot and killed by a predator she'd met 18 days prior. It was not long after they met that she knew this man was not what he'd been presenting himself to be. On November 30th she tried ending the relationship. It was then that he began texting her repeatedly stating that he was going to kill himself, that he had a gun and that he had written a goodbye letter. Emily was at work but stepped aside and called 911 desperate to help him. When asked, Emily stated clearly that she was sure he had a gun. She reported her concerns to the dispatcher stating "he's going to kill me for telling anyone that" and also provided his cellphone number, information on his current location as well as the name & location of the

motel that he had recently been staying at. After a 911 call that lasted well over an hour, police action was finally taken.

Shortly after the call ended a Bridgeport police officer spotted the car Emily described. They made phone contact and asked the driver to pull over. As they attempted to speak with him he evaded and a high speed pursuit ensued. Minutes later the pursuit was disengaged for the safety of the community.

Across the police radios the sergeant stated "if he is going to commit 42 (the internal code used for suicide) he's going to commit 42-disengage." Not the officers involved right then or any other members of this police department did anything to follow-up on or investigate Emily's concerns. The Police did not locate and take him for psychiatric assessment or into their custody for evading them. The Department had his D.O.B, his license plate number, the vehicle description, the knowledge that he possessed a firearm along with a likely location where he could be found and made no effort to locate and/or apprehend him after disengaging from the vehicle pursuit on November 30th. Emily and myself both tried several times to call the Police Department for an update with no response. Feeling very unsettled we also both contacted our local Police asking for their help. Our officers tried on two occasions to get information. No one responded

to the Bethel Police and 8 days later this man murdered my daughter.

I would like you to imagine what a daily horror it is for me knowing that if the police would have apprehended Emily's murderer in the week that followed her 911 call it is more likely than not that she would be alive today. Had the Police Department been as concerned for someone's human life as she was they'd have found him in possession of a gun he'd purchased in Ohio and brought across State lines. Those we entrust to protect and serve failed my daughter in so many ways. She had her whole life ahead of her and she is dead.

The neglect & lack of care shown to Emily by the police has been life altering and the powerlessness we experienced as a family, both before and after her murder, is indescribable. Over the past 27 months I have learned a great deal about CT's ERPO legislation and believe the current policy regarding "Extreme Risk" is grossly outdated. Our tragedy has me certain that significant changes must be made to save the next young woman who will find herself in a situation she cannot control who calls for help. We can no longer have a system dependent solely on the response of a 911 dispatcher

and police department as the only resource someone has when in a crisis.

If passed in this session, HB 6355 would make several critical updates to the current Extreme Risk Protection law. First, it would expand eligibility of those who could petition the court for an order to include family or household members and specific medical professionals. Under current law, two police officers or a state's attorney can seek a protective order.

Under this new proposal, family and household members, specified medical professionals, and a single police officer would be able to petition the court for a protective order.

Family members are often the first to recognize when their loved one is in crisis, so it is crucial that they have a way to directly petition the court to temporarily remove guns from those who could be a risk to themselves or others. One study showed that Connecticut's law was associated with a 14 percent reduction in the rate of firearm suicide in the state, yet on average, someone dies from suicide every three days right here in CT-we must and we can do better.

Secondly the updated bill would prevent a person subject to an order from obtaining new firearms. As the law now reads,

an individual who is found by the court to pose a danger to themselves or others is required to forfeit their firearms, but is not specifically prohibited from purchasing a new weapon and we need that to be clarified.

Thank you for your time today